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# Watson's Art Journal.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, MAR. 14, 1868.

PUBLICATION OFFICE, CLINTON HALL, ASTOR PLACE, where all communications should be addressed, and where subscriptions and advertisements will be received.

TO CORRESPONDENTS AND OTHERS.—We shall be pleased to receive information from all parts of the country, on the active progress of the Arts of Music and Painting. We will pay especial attention to such information, and will duly chronicle all facts of interest. We invite all to communicate with us, with the assurance that such correspondence will meet with prompt and courteous consideration.

## OLE BULL'S CONCERTS.

This distinguished violinist who has witch-ed the world with his noble instrument for nearly half a century, returns here next week after a triumphant tour of ten weeks through the West. Had Ole Bull been a hero returning after some great conquest, the ovations could hardly have been greater than those which were tendered him in the Western cities. Torch-light processions awaited him at the various railway stations, serenades at the hotels, and complimentary addresses awaited him at the various places on his route. These were not empty ovations, they were genuine demonstrations of respect and esteem, for he is remembered lovingly through the West, and the people thronged his concerts to see Ole Bull, but they remained to hear him, for all felt that he was a greater artist than ever, and that his playing was more than ever inspired.

While every other musical organization has failed, Ole Bull has made a remarkable money success, clearing in a few weeks many thousands of dollars. In some places he was compelled to give two concerts the same day, for the reason that people for miles round had poured into the town to hear the great violinist, and found every ticket sold to the inhabitants of the place. Coming so far their disappointment was great, so to relieve it, a concert was improvised in the afternoon, and at one place four hundred dollars were taken from those who could not get a ticket for the evening.

A reception so brilliant Ole Bull could hardly have hoped for, and its spontaneousness must have gratified him deeply, proving, as it did, that tradition had embalmed the reputation which he earned so long ago, and had preserved a popularity which was second to that of no artist who ever visited the country. By the public he was everywhere received with acclamation, so that each appearance was an ovation. But, if the public welcomed him cordially, the press was not a whit behind in its enthusiastic recognition of his artistic efforts. Our endorsement, given after having heard him several times in private, prepared our critical friends in the West for what they were to hear, and they found that our remarks were all just, and that our giant Norseman had renewed his youth, and was grander and purer in his style, while still preserving his wonderful technique, than at either of his former visits, the first dating back nearly a quarter of a century.

The following criticism from a Chicago

journal is a sample of the written opinions of all the papers of the West, and indicates the impression which Ole Bull's playing made upon all who heard him:

"The grand, fascinating element of Ole Bull's playing is his identification of his own personality, in all its varied wealth of resource, with his instrument. The instrument is but his longer arm, his more supple fingers, his all-assimilating imagination, and lively, charming fancy, his depth of human feeling and inspired reach of human thought—all made vocal as if, by a more than human tongue, voiceful with airs of Paradise. With all previous violinists—even Vieuxtemps—the phrase, 'the violin speaks,' seems far-fetched and empty. There is a deep gulf between the reality and it. But in Ole Bull's hands the violin does literally speak—not, of course, in articulate words, but no less potently and intelligibly and inspiringly, in the inarticulate language of passion and sentiment and cunning art, which voices our heart's profoundest thoughts, most ardent imaginings and deepest feelings, and repeats to us with something more than an echo of sound of nature and song of bird. This is what he does. How he does it would lead us too far; and quite uselessly, into the trite realm of the technical; and after we had told all,—by what art every trill and run, every speaking melody and rich harmony was effected,—neither we nor our readers would know any more about it than before. Do we ask how heaven's breezes blow? No; we cannot tell whence they come, nor whither they go. Do we ask how the running brook is voiceful, and how singing bird is nature's executant? No; we are content to hear and enjoy. No sooner should we think of telling how Ole Bull produces his effects; nor should we any more think of criticising them than of criticising Æolian murmurs, ripple of running waters, or carol of bird. These are all simply above criticism, as being out of its domain. All that water or bird or breeze can do, it does; all that string and bow and sounding board can do, they do in Ole Bull's hands.

"Then, separating in thought the instrument from the performance, what a personality is that which stands at the back of the instrument, and creates a soul under the ribs of death! The man is 'great with' the instrument; but he is also greater than it. When you once come to know him—his manliness, his tenderness, his graciousness—what possibilities, beyond and greater than mere art, but in which true art is involved, do you find! And how, still separating instrument from performer, does he for the moment lavish all these upon and infuse them all into his violin. He looks upon it as though he loves it, and it returned love with equal love. His eyes half closed, half in ecstasy, half in watchfulness, he yields to it, and he commands it. The melody which he creates enraptures him; and from hence comes inspiration for diviner strains."

Ole Bull gives his first Concert at Steinway Hall on Wednesday evening next, the 18th instant, assisted by his concert company, Madame Varian Hoffman, Mr. Ignace Pollak, and Mr. Edward Hoffman. His second Concert will take place on the following Friday, and his last will be a matinee, on Saturday morning the 21st, also at Steinway Hall. We need not advise our readers to attend, for we believe that the announcement alone is sufficient to crowd the Hall on each occasion.

## CONCERT OF THE PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY.

The New York Philharmonic Society gave the fourth concert of the twenty-sixth season, at the Academy of Music, on Saturday evening last. It was a cheering sight to all lovers of the true and beautiful in art, to see the crowded and brilliant audience assembled on this occasion. The Academy was literally crowded to the very roof, and high up in the family circle could be found the very elite of the city, who willingly suffered the eclipse of their superb toilettes for the sake of listening to the sublime strains of the masters of the musical art. There were special pilgrims to our great musical shrine, from Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Connecticut, Jersey, and up the river; a tribute to the perfection of our Philharmonic Orchestra, highly flattering, certainly, but only a just tribute and nothing more. Such audiences as have attended the concerts of the Philharmonic this year, make us hope that, notwithstanding the vastly increased expenses, the pecuniary result will equal that of any preceding year.

The programme of the fourth concert was as follows:

### PART I.

Symphony in G minor, Mozart: 1. Allegro Molto. 2. Andante. 3. Minuetto and Trio. 4. Finale—Allegro assai.

Scena ed Aria, from the Opera "Oberon," Weber: "Ocean thou Mighty Monster!" (Ocean du' Ungeheuer.) Madame Parepa-Rosa.

### PART II.

Introduction to "Lohengrin." Wagner. Aria—"Deh vieni," "Nozze di Figaro," Mozart. Madame Parepa-Rosa.

Symphony, in A major, Op. 30, Mendelssohn: 1. Allegro Vivace. 2. Andante con Moto. 3. Scherzo con moto moderato. 4. Saltarello—Presto.

Overwhelmed as we have been of late with the massive and almost melo-dramatic music of Berlioz, Liszt, and Wagner, it is refreshing to the soul to listen to the pure, spontaneous, unadulterated musical thoughts of Mozart. They are clear, bright and sparkling as the purling brook from the fountain head, and are truly human in their sentiment and tender pathos. In an orchestral point of view, they are models for all time; models for the refined and characteristic treatment of all classes of instruments—a treatment which develops the subject, however complicated, with a clearness which is perfectly individual, while at the same time the coloring, by the most simple means, invests the whole with a halo of exquisite fancy, and delicate and brilliant imaginings. We do not need to speak of the merits of the G minor symphony, for its beauty is recognized by all lovers of music; but of its performance by our splendid Philharmonic Orchestra, we might utter a column of praise. Dealing with dainty materials, most daintily did the orchestra do its work. We never heard finer shading; the violins were as one instrument in the hands of a great master, so fine was the phrasing, so delicate and true the execution and the intonation. It was a perfect luxury to listen to the rich tide of violin sound, so full and swelling, yet so softened and refined in its largeness. Equal honor is due to all the other instruments. The spirit of generous rivalry to excel, seemed to animate the entire band, and, guided by their capable leader, their efforts resulted in a per-

formance so perfectly admirable, that the dear Mozart, could he have heard it, would have thrown himself upon Bergmann's neck and kissed him.

The Introduction to Lohengrin needs a key to explain its meaning. It is grandly instrumental, and is clearly, intensely thoughtful; but being of the Programme-music class, it needs a commentary to make its meaning clear. In the long holding notes with which the piece concludes, the violins were a shade flat, otherwise Wagner's Introduction received ample justice at the hands of the orchestra.

Mendelssohn's A major symphony was always a favorite with our public, for every reason which can endear music to an audience, and its superb performance on Saturday evening last, was listened to with profound and admiring attention. It is a master piece in construction, its elements are pure musical inspirations, and its orchestral treatment exhibits that profound knowledge of all the resources of instrumentation, which has placed Mendelssohn side by side with the few great masters in symphonic writing. Its execution displayed all the high points of excellence which we have noted above. It was a performance without reproach, delightful to listen to, and worthy of the only great instrumental organization in America. The fourth concert fully equalled its predecessors in its surpassing executive excellence.

No one can expect to be equally great in all things, and Madame Parepa afforded an illustration of the fact, when she attempted Weber's grand Scena from "Oberon," which is emphatically the most dramatic vocal composition extant. It is descriptive throughout, and deals with a variety of emotions and passions; and if these are not expressed, the composition loses all its point. Madame Parepa-Rosa substituted for grandeur of expression and intensity of passion, clearness of enunciation only; to utter the words syllable by syllable with a slow and painful distinctness, seemed to be her sole aim, and this she achieved at a sacrifice of the design and intention of the composer. Of course Madame Parepa sang well—so fine an artist could not do otherwise; but she did not give an artistic reading of the work, nor did she give any evidence that she felt or appreciated Weber's wonderful exposition of the situation. We know that Madame Rosa is overworked; but, even allowing that, we cannot accept from so prominent an artist so feeble an interpretation of so grand a composition. She was more successful in Mozart's aria, although that was by no means as satisfactory as we could have desired—excepting as to the accompaniment which was played to perfection by the orchestra.

"Un jeu de bonheur," recently produced at Paris with such success, is the fortieth dramatic work of the veteran Auber, whose Operatta "L'Ambassadrice" has just been played at the St. George's Opera House, London, with Mlle. Liebhart as the heroine.

Some of the late Professors of the London Academy of Music intend to carry on the school by the aid of private subscription. The Principal, Dr. Sterndale Bennett, announces that the session will open this month with an increase of students.

The report of a contemporary, that a daughter of Mr. John Hullah is about to appear on the stage is without foundation.

## THE PIANO QUESTION POSITIVELY SETTLED ONCE MORE:

Some one has again kindly settled the question of the piano supremacy between Messrs. Chickering and Steinways in favor of the latter. The Steinways were so certain of winning from the first that they have felt it necessary to get Tom, Dick and Harry to solemnly settle the fact, some score of times or so, each settlement weakening their boasting assertions, and leaving them now hopelessly laggards in the race. One of the half hundred music-store advertising sheets in the interest of the Steinway house has the following:

"The American struggle for precedence in the awards of prizes for pianofortes is now settled by the official printed list, pretty generally circulated. Steinway, the inventor of the metal framework and other improvements, comes after the name of Broadwood, and precedes that of his valiant rival, Chickering.—London Orchestra.

"The foregoing is from an influential foreign journal, which can have no interest in the affair save to state facts, and to clear up a matter which has caused a great deal of newspaper controversy. Now that it is settled by the official printed list, and universally acknowledged by the press, we trust that the intelligent hundred thousand readers of the *Orpheus* will have no doubt that Messrs. Steinway & Sons received the first medal awarded to American pianoforte exhibitors. We are glad that the matter is really decided at last."

The London Orchestra evidently mistakes the whole matter, for it credits the iron frame to Steinway, when it is universally known to be the invention of Chickering. The matter of precedence is well known to be of absolutely no importance, the three medals being equal in value and significance, while the "Order of the Legion of Honor," conferred upon Chickering as a mark of superior merit over all other makers, is a settler for the pretensions of the Steinways, which all their advertising dodges can never rise from under. It must be to them a terrible and mortifying fact that several members of the same committee who certified, on the 20th of July, 1867, that they had been awarded the first gold medal, which certificate they still publish everywhere, should, on the 19th of November, 1867, state distinctly that the bestowal of the Legion of Honor was an additional honor to the presentation of the gold medal! Then came Liszt's unqualified testimonial as to the superiority of the Chickering pianos! A heaping of testimony upon testimony, which undoubtedly settles the question beyond dispute. The "Morpheus" is glad that the matter is really settled at last, but its gladness is of that sort where one laughs on the wrong side of the mouth.

Chickering & Sons have received yet another testimonial to the superior construction of their pianos, which the following paragraph from the London correspondence of *Town and Country*, a clever paper recently published by Mr. P. F. Nicholson, will fully expound:

"Mr. James M. Wehli, who came back from America with expanded ideas on the subject of the pianoforte, endeavored to induce some of the principal manufacturers to attempt the experiment of constructing a framework upon the model of that invented by Messrs. Chickering & Sons. He succeeded after a while in winning the Messrs. Col-

lrd to his views, and the result was that he presently played in Covent Garden Theatre upon a pianoforte which, not only in the matter of the frame, but also in other important particulars, was a precise copy of the Chickering grand. The superiority in tone and power were at once and universally conceded, and the reputation of Messrs. Collard & Collard, already high, has risen again. But I do not anywhere discover the slightest allusion to the real originators of the improvement."

Taking credit for the use of other people's brains is not a purely American institution. But however the Messrs. Collard may try to hide the fact, it will come out, and the honor will be given to Chickering & Sons, to whom it belongs.

## EDITORIAL NOTES.

The New York Mendelssohn Union gave their third concert on the 27th ult., before, we regret to say, a somewhat thin and fearfully unappreciative audience. It was cold without and cold within, and each piece of music seemed to add to the inward chilliness and to exert an active depressing effort upon the lugubrious audience. The programme was very badly arranged, the first being a mere selection of songs, with one concerted piece of the following peculiar construction namely, solo quartette with chorus, with an independent pianoforte accompaniment, in the bass for one finger. The effect was novel, not to say pleasing, but peculiar, and stamps the work as decidedly original. The chorus part was charmingly sung, and the solo quartette was—well it was wonderful, and like the ways of Providence, past all understanding.

Van Bree's Cantata "St. Cecilia," is a very pleasing work, but by no means large enough to form the *piece de resistance* for so able and competent a society, as the Mendelssohn Union. The choruses were, however, very admirably sung, and had the success of the concert depended upon the choral efforts, we should have nothing to record but praise. Mr. Bristow did all a conductor could do, but we hope that the next concert will effectually efface the memory of the last.

Mr. C. B. Derby gave a very pleasant concert at Flushing, Long Island, on the 24th ult., which from the artists announced should have attracted a large audience, but the sublime apathy of the rural population cannot be moved by any thing less potent than calomel or a circus company. These benighted foreign parts should be left severely alone, for their stolid ingratitude towards those who seek to drive a little light into the adipos deposit which they call brains, is simply intolerable. When a concert or "show," as they elegantly term it, is announced, every one is open-mouthed with a blank expression of pleasure, but when the "show" comes, their mouths are closed as well as their pockets. However, the artists, Messrs. Poznanski, Derby, Hall, Johnson and Morgan sang and played to the atoms present, as though they had been sentient, intelligent beings. Poznanski played deliciously and Morgan pianoized with more brilliancy and élan than we ever heard him display before. Mr. Derby has a very sweet and melodious tenor voice and sang very tastefully. Mr. Hall has a fine voice and sang with spirit.

Mrs. Marie Abbott was announced, and was present, but as her music and dresses